THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As per the information provided by Govt. of Tamil Nadu, cultivation of Bt. Cotton is picking up in the State. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in the Ministry of Environment & Forests have notified certain Bt. Cotton hybrids for commercial cultivation after assessing the performance through various multi location and large scale field trials. The area covered under the Bt. Cotton is less compared to the other cotton varieties. No reports on failure has been received so far.

(c) and (d Question does not arise.

NAFED Loan

†1073. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India is functional in the country;

(b) if so, the main responsibility entrusted to the said Federation;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the said Federation has also provided loan in the past;

(d) if so, the amount disbursed as loan from 2000 to the end of 2004; and

(e) the income earned annually through disbursing loan?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Suicided in Maharashtra

1074. SHRI DATTA MEGHE:
SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that farmers suicide toll has risen to 100 in Vidarbha;

(b) if so, the details thereof since 2003-04 and the measures taken by the Central Government to reassure farmers;

(c) the details of study, if any, conducted and its outcome;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) whether one of the reasons for farmers suicide is the high interest rates being charged by money lenders; and

(e) if so, the specific measures taken by the Central Government for ensuring cheap loans to farmers, particularly in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, where more farmers have committed suicide?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) The Government of Maharashtra appointed the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development and Research, Mumbai to study and analyse all the socio-economic issues underlying farmers' suicides in the State. The Institute has not yet submitted its final Report to the State Government.

(d) As reported by the State Government, increasing cost of loans is identified as one of the causes for suicide committed by farmers.

(e) In order to enhance credit flow to agriculture, the Government of India announced a credit package on 18th June, 2004, which envisaged doubling of agriculture credit over three years. It has, *inter-alia*, also envisaged debt restructuring in respect of farmers in distress and farmers in arrears by providing reschedulement of outstanding loans over a period of five years, special one time settlement scheme for setting the old and chronic loan accounts of small and marginal farmers and allowing Banks to finance the redeeming of loans taken by farmers from private moneylenders.

The Government of India is further addressing the varied credit needs of farmers through Kisan Credit Cards. In mitigating risks of farmers the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme is already in operation. The above interventions along with a slew of measures for augmenting agricultural production and marketing will over time reduce the distress of farmers.

Effect of soil erosion on agricultural productivity

†1075. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the productivity rate is getting affected due to the soil erosion in the country;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.